

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 100251
ORIGIN IO-03

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-01 /005 R

66011

DRAFTED BY: NEA/EGABINGTON:BDF

APPROVED BY: NEA:EGABINGTON

-----040603Z 121034 /13

P 032358Z MAY 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE STATE 100251

FOR HIRSCH

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN, CAIRO,
DAMASCUS, JERUSALEM FROM TEL AVIV MAY 02:

QUOTE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE TEL AVIV 3049

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IS

SUBJECT: SIZING UP THE KNESSET ELECTION CAMPAIGN

BEGIN SUMMARY:WITH TWO WEEKS TO GO, THE PARTIES HAVE
YET TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE ISSUES DISTURBING THIS
COUNTRY. PERSONALITIES AND ALOGANS ARE MORE EVIDENT
IN CAMPAIGN STRATEGY THAN IS SERIOUS DEBATE. WHILE THE
ALIGNMENT, LIKUD AND DMC DIRECT THEIR CAMPAIGNS AT
EACH OTHER WITH THE AVOWED PURPOSE OF HEADING THE
NEXT GOVERNMENT,THE OTHER PARTIES EXPECTED TO WIN
SEATS REFLECT THE MORE MODEST GOAL OF ACQUIRING SUF-
FICIENT REPRESENTATION TO INFLUENCE FUTURE POLICY.
END SUMMARY.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 STATE 100251

1. WITH LITTLE MORE THAN TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE ELECTION,
THE CAMPAIGN IS IN FULL SWING. NEWSPAPER ADS SHOUT AT
THE READER, EMPTY WALL SPACES OF CITY STREETS ARE
QUICKLY FILLING UP WITH CAMPAIGN POSTERS, TV TIME FOR
THE CAMPAIGN COMMERCIALS HAS BEEN SET ASIDE NIGHTLY
AT 9:30 IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE EVENING NEWS, AND
NORMALLY ACCESSIBLE POLITICIANS ARE ON THE HUSTINGS
AND GENERALLY UNAVAILABLE TO NON-VOTERS LIKE THE
DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY.ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO LACK OF
ISSUES,THEIR TREATMENT HAS BEEN SUPERFICIAL AND NO

SINGLE ONE HAS YET DOMINATED THE CAMPAIGN. IN THE MEANTIME, PERSONALITIES FIGURE MORE PROMINENTLY IN CAMPAIGN ADS, SPEECHES AND LITERATURE THAN DO ISSUES. THERE IS A CERTAIN MADISON AVENUE SLICKNESS TO THE ADS, NEW TO ISRAELI CAMPAIGNS, THAT REFLECTS THE HAND OF PR FIRMS RATHER THAN POLITICANS. THE RESULT THUS FAR IS AN UNEDIFYING, SHALLOW CAMPAIGN THAT WOULD PERHAPS BE MORE APPROPRIATE FOR INTRODUCING A NEW LAUNDRY DETERMAGENT OR CIGARETTE BRAND.

2. THERE IS WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT THAT FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS THE ELECTION OF THE NINTH KNESSET APPEARS MORE DIFFICULT TO FORECAST THAN ITS PREDECESSORS. IN ADDITION TO THE SUDDEN CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE ALIGNMENT, THE MANY SCANDALS PLAGUING THE PARTY, AND THE FORMIDABLE CHALLENGE OF A NEW PARTY (DMC), THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN MEMORY THAT HISTADRUT ELECTIONS WILL NOT PRECEDE THE KNESSET ELECTION, PROVIDING A BELLWETHER FOR THE RESULTS OF THE LATTER POLL AND A SORT OF DRESS REHEARSAL FOR THE KNESSET CAMPAIGN.

3. THE ALIGNMENT. EACH PARTY CULTIVATES A CERTAIN STYLE GEARED TO ITS OBJECTIVES AND THE SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION IT IS ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE. THE ALIGNMENT, OF COURSE, IS TRYING TO MAINTAIN ITS NUMBER ONE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 STATE 100251

POSITION. HOWEVER DISCERNIBLE LATELY IS A RAISING OF ITS SIGHTS TO THE GOAL OF ACHIEVING A KNESSET MAJORITY. WHILE FEW SERIOUSLY BELIEVE THIS IS LIKELY, THIS AMBITION IS SAID TO REFLECT PERES' INPUT AND IS A MEASURE OF THE PARTY'S DOGGED DETERMINATION DESPITE ITS VICISSITUDES. THE ALIGNMENT'S CAMPAIGN MACHINERY WAS SLOW IN GETTING STARTED, HAVING BEEN CONTINUOUSLY THROWN OFF BALANCE BY THE STRING OF PARTY CRISES AND SET-BACKS OF THE PAST FEW MONTHS. EVEN NOW IT IS FIGHTING TO OVERCOME THE ADVERSE PUBLICITY SURROUNDING ABBA EBAN AND THE COMPTROLLER' REPORT.

4. AT THE SAME TIME, STUNG BY THE SUCCESS OF THE DMC'S EMPHASIS ON CHANGE, THE ALIGNMENT IS ATTEMPTING TO COMBAT ITS IMAGE OF MORE OF THE SAME BY STRESSING ITS NEW LEADERSHIP. IT HITS BACK AT THE DMC BY POINTING OUT THAT ALL OF THE TOPDMC CANDIDATES COME FROM THE THREE MAJOR CITIES (AND FROM GOOD NEIGHBORHOODS AT THAT) WHILE THE ALIGNMENT CAN BOAST A FAIR PROPORTION OF WOMEN, ORIENTALS, YOUTH, KIBBUTZNIKS AND REPRESENTATION FROM ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY AMONG ITS CANDIDATES.

5. PROMINENT IN THE ALIGNMENT'S CAMPAIGN IS THE SCARE

TACTICS USED AGAINST THE LIKUD. THE ALIGNMENT DOES ITS BEST TO PREVENT THE LIKUD FROM OVERCOMING ITS IMAGE AS THE WAR PARTY. IN ONE TV PRESENTATION, IT PORTRAYS A FREIGHTENED NATION AFTER WAKING UP TO FIND THE LIKUD IN POWER. "WILL IT MEAN USING THE IDF TO BREAK STRIKES? WHAT ABOUT GENEVA?" THE BEWILDERED ACTORS ASK. THROUGHOUT ITS CAMPAIGN THE ALIGNMENT ADS REPEAT THAT VOTING FOR THE DMC, SHELI, ETC., IS REALLY A VOTE FOR THE LIKUD.

6. THE LIKUD. THIS LATTER POINT IS THE OVERRIDING THEME OF THE LIKUD - ONLY IN REVERSE. IT CONTINUOUSLY DRUMS OUT THE MESSAGE: "THERE IS ONLY ONE PARTY THAT CAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 04 STATE 100251

EFFECT A CHANGE IN ADMINISTRATION - THE LIKUD. "ITS CAMPAIGN STRATEGY CONCENTRATES ON THE ALIGNMENT, ONLY OCCASIONALLY ATTACKING THE DMC AMONG THE LESSER PARTIES AS A JUNIOR VERSION OF THE LABOR PARTY. IT IS WELL ORGANIZED FOR THE CAMPAIGN, AND AS A BLOC RATHER THAN A SINGLE PARTY SUCCESSFULLY PROJECTS AN IMAGE OF UNITY. IN CONTRAST TO THE PICTURE OF THE ALIGNMENT, WITH LABOR IN PARTNERSHIP WITH A RELUCTANT MAPAM, THE LIKUD APPEARS MONOLITHIC UNDER THE UNDISPUTED LEADERSHIP OF A BENEVOLENT MENAHEM BEGIN.

7. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR HOW MUCH BEGIN'S ILLNESS HAS AFFECTED THE LIKUD'S CAMPAIGN. HE HAS BEGUN APPEARING IN LIKUD'S TV COMMERCIALS, LOOKING THINNER AND OLDER AS A RESULT OF HIS HEART ATTACK. HE IS EXPECTED TO DEBATE PERES ON MAY 12 IN A FORTH-MINUTE TELEVISED PROGRAM SIMILAR TO THE CARTER-FORD DEBATES (WHICH BEGIN VERY ATTENTIVELY VIEWED AT THE EMBASSY). BY THEN, HE SHOULD BE MAKING PERSONAL APPEARANCES AROUND THE COUNTRY, BUT ON A RELATIVELY RELAXED SCHEDULE. ALTHOUGH SOME BELIEVE HIS ILLNESS MAY GENERATE A SYMPATHY VOTE, WE FEEL THAT IT HAS HURT THE LIKUD CAMPAIGN AND ITS PROSPECTS. SYMPATHY WILL PROBABLY BE A FACTOR ONLY AMONG THOSE INCLINED TO VOTE FOR THE LIKUD ANYWAY. OTHER VOTERS SEE THAT THE PARTY'S SECOND-RANKERS, WHETHER IT BE THE COLORLESS SIMCHA ERHLICH OR THE IMPULSIVE, IMMODERATE EZIR WEIZMAN, LACK LEADERSHIP QUALITIES AND THIS, WITH BEGIN IN QUESTIONABLE HEALTH, MAY WELL TURN THEM AWAY FROM THE LIKUD. THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE IN THE LIKUD'S CAMPAIGN THAT CONSTRUCTIVELY ADDRESSES ISRAEL'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. MUCH OF ITS PREACHING SEEMS AIMED AT THE ALREADY CONVERTED.

8. DMC. OFF TO A BOOMING START SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, IT NOW APPEARS TO HAVE FALTERED. ALTHOUGH YADIN SEEMS TO HAVE EMERGED FROM THE HAOLOM HAZE'S ACCUSATIONS UNHARMED,

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 05 STATE 100251

THE PARTY HAS LOST SOME OF ITS FRESHNESS AND "VOICE OF THE PEOPLE" AURA. IT CONTINUES TO HAMMER AWAY AT THEMES THAT HAVE WIDE ACCEPTANCE; STIFLING BUREAUCRACY, CRIPPLING STRIKES, MALDISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH, ETC., BUT THERE IS SOME QUESTION WHETHER SHMEL TAMIR, FORMERLY OF THE FREE CENTER, LIKUD, HERUT ETC., AND FAR FROM A FRESH FACE, HAS NOT CAPTURED THE PARTY --A DOUBT ON WHICH THE ALIGNMENT HAS CLEVERLY CAPITALIZED IN ONE OF ITS FEATURED ADS. BUT THE DMC'S BIGGEST PROBLEM IS THE ABSENCE OF ORIENTAL OR WORKING CLASS ISRAELIS FROM ITS LIST. IN A SENSE ITS EXPERIMENT IN OPEN VOTING FOR THE SELCTION OF CANDIDATES WAS TOO SUCCESSFUL. ALL THE PROMINENT NAMES WON, LEAVING NO ROOM AT THE TOP FOR THE LESSER LIGHTS. THE DMC IS THUS VULNERABLE TO CHARGES THAT IT IS AN UPPER AND MIDDLE CLASS PARTY OF INTELLECTUALS WHICH HAS LITTLE IN COMMON WITH LABORERS OR VOTERS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENTS.

9. MOREOVER, SOME PERCEIVE A FLAW IN ITS CAMPAIGN STRATEGY: IT IS REACHING TOO FAR. UNLIKE ALL THE OTHER SMALLER PARTIES WHICH SPEAK OF MERELY GAINING STRENGTH SO AS TO BE ABLE TO INFLUENCE THE NEXT GOVERNMENT, THE DMC WITH ITS EMPHASIS ON THOROUGHGOING CHANGE TALKS OF REPLACING THE ALIGNEMNT, I.E., WINNING THE ELECTION--SOMETHING THE VOTERS FIND UNBELIEVABLE. FEW DOUBT THAT AT BEST THE DMC WILL BE ONLY A JUNIOR PARTNER IN A COALITION AND, HTEREFORE, FORCED TO COMPORMISE MANY OF ITS PRINCIPLES. AS A CONSEQUENCE, THE CYNICAL ISRAELI ELECTORATE DOES NOT SEE MUCH POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE IN THE DMC.

10. NRP. ISRAEL'S MAJOR RELIGIOUS PARTY ASPIRES TO BE INDISPENSABLE TO THE NEXT COALITION. HAVING RECEIVED ABOUT EIGHT PERCENT OF THE 1973 VOTE,
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 06 STATE 100251

ITS SIGHTS ARE SET ON CAPTRUING A LARGER SHARE OF THE VOTES OF OBSERVANT ISRAELIS, WHO ARE SAID TO NUMBER 25-30 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION. BECAUSE OF ITS INTRA-PARTY STRUGGLES (INVOLVING PRINCIPALLY THE OUSTER OF YITZHAK RAPHAEL) ITS CAMPAIGN WAS SLOW GETTING STARTED. ITS APPROACH TENDS TO BE LOW KEYED, STRESSING THE PARTY'S IMPORTANCE IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PRESERVING TRADITIONAL

VALUES, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME SAYING IT IS A NEW NRP (WITHOUT RAPHAEL) WITH A NEW LEADERSHIP. SO FAR IT HAS STEERED CLEAR OF DISCUSSING ITS HARDLINE FOREIGN POLICY POSITIONS, SEEN STIFFENING AS A RESULT OF CHANGES IN ITS LEADERSHIP. BUT ASIDE FROM ITS FACTIONS AND THE SCARS LEFT FROM ITS INTERNAL STRUGGLES, THERE IS A BASIC RIFT IN THE PARTY THAT MAY COST VOTES. THE DIVISION IS BETWEEN ONE CAMP LED BY YOSEF BURG FAVORING THE PARTY'S TRADITIONAL PRO-ALIGNMENT STANCE AND ANOTHER BUILT AROUND THE YOUTH FACTION WITH ITS PRO-LIKUD POSITION.

1. SHELI. THIS LEFTIST BLOC EMPHASIZES ITS BASIC COMMITMENT TO PEACE, FOR WHICH IT IS PREPARED TO TALK TO PALESTINIAN ARABS INCLUDING THE PLO. ALTHOUGH A SMALL PARTY (ITS MEMBERSHIP IS A MERE FRACTION OF THE DMC'S) IT HAS FIELDDED THREE PROMINENT PERSONALITIES IN THE RACE: ARYE ELIAV, MEIR PE'IL AND URI AVNERI. ITS IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE IS TO ATTRACT MAPAM VOTERS UNCOMFORTABLE IN THE ALIGNMENT. SHELI'S PITCH IS THAT MAPAM HAS SOLD OUT; THAT IT IS BURIED IN THE ALIGNMENT AND WITHOUT INFLUENCE.

12. OTHERS. AMONG THE SMALLER PARTIES, THE TWO AGUDAH FACTIONS HAVE A LIMITED BUT LOYAL CONSTITUENCY AND THEIR CAMPAIGN IS GENERALLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 07 STATE 100251

RESTRICTED TO THAT AUDIENCE. THEY ARE EXPECTED TO MAINTAIN THEIR CURRENT REPRESENTATION OF FIVE IN THE KNESSET, GIVE OR TAKE ONE. SHULAMIT ALONI'S CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND THE OLDER AND MORE SOLID ILP ARE IN AN UPHILL BATTLE TO HOLD THEIR OWN AGAINST THE INROADS OF THE DMC. THE CAMPAIGN OF ARIK SHARON'S SHLOMZION PARTY, APPARENTLY HAMSTRUNG BY LACK OF FUNDS (AND PERHAPS ENTHUSIASM), IS SO FAR BARELY VISIBLE. ITS OCCASIONAL NEWSPAPER ADS TOUT SHARON AS THE CHOICE OF DEFENSE MINISTER AND SUGGEST A COMBINATION WITH THE LIKUD. IT MAY WIN ONE OR POSSIBLY TWO SEATS BUT FEW BELIEVE THAT IF LEFT OUTSIDE THE COALITION SHARON WOULD BE CONTENT AS HEAD OF A TINY FACTION IN THE KNESSET. AFTER THE ELECTION HE IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS TO MERGE WITH A LARGER PARTY WHICH WERE CUT SHORT BY THE FILING DATE DEADLINE ON APRIL 12.

13. ASIDE FROM RAKAH AND THE TWO ARAB LISTS (SEE TEL AVIV 2882 FOR A DISCUSSION OF THEIR

PORSPECTS), THE ABOVE ARE THE PARTIES WITH AT
LEAST SOME CHANCE OF EMERGING WITH A SIGNIFICANT
KNESSET REPRESENTATION. ONE OR MORE OF THE 22
PARTIES RUNNING (OF THE 23 THAT FILED, ONE WAS
DISQUALIFIED FOR HAVING IRREGULARITIES IN ITS
APPLICATION) MAY WIN A SINGLE SEAT, BUT THIS
WOULD HAVE LITTLE EFFECT ON THE BALANCE OF FORCES
IN THE NINTH KNESSET. ALTHOUGH THIS CAMPAIGN
IS IN MANY WAYS UNPRECEDENTED IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY,
THE MAJOR FORCES IN CONTENTION,
EXCEPT FOR THE DMC, REMAIN MUCH THE SAME AS THEY HAVE BEEN IN EARLIER
ELECTIONS. ONE IS AGAIN REMINDED OF THE VOTING
CONSERVATISM OF THE ISRAELI ELECTORATE WHICH,
DESPITE THE WAVES OF IMMIGRATION
SINCE STATEHOOD AND THE VARIED BACKGROUND OF THE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 08 STATE 100251

POPULATION, HAS MANDATED COALITION GOVERNMENTS
WITH LITTLE VARIATION IN COMPOSITION THROUGHOUT
EIGHT PREVIOUS ELECTIONS. DUNNIGAN UNQUOTE VANCE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 22-Sep-1999 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, ELECTION FORECASTS, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 03-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE100251
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA/EGABINGTON:BDF
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D770155-1147
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197705110/baaaevuq.tel
Line Count: 297
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7ea66088-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN IO
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2344723
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SIZING UP THE KNESSET ELECTION CAMPAIGN
TAGS: PINT, IS
To: USUN N'Y
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7ea66088-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009